DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 066 CE 055 163

AUTHOR	Ezeomah, Chimah
TITLE	Educating Nomads for Self-Actualization and Development. Literacy Lessons.
INSTITUTION	International Bureau of Education, Geneva (Switzerland).
PUB DATE	90
NOTE	17p.; For other "Literacy Lessons" booklets, see CE 055 128-167. Also available in French.
AVAILABLE FROM	International Bureau of Education, P.O. Box 199, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.
PUB TYPE	Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Basic Skills; Comparative Education; *Developing Nations; Educational History; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; Literacy Education; *Migrant Children; Migrant Education; *Minority Groups; *Nomads; Numbers; Self Actualization; Transient Children; Tribes
IDENTIFIERS	International Literacy Year 1990

ABSTRACT

Nomadism is a worldwide phenomenon and its practitioners fall into three categories: (1) hunter/food gatherers, such as the Hadzabe in the United Republic of Tanzania; (2) itinerant workers, including the gypsies in North America; and (3) pastoralists, such as the Masai and Shuaw Arabs in Africa, the Sami in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, and the Inuits in Canada. These nomadic groups constitute a sizable portion of the world population. For instance, according to the United Nations, the 1977 population of pastoralists was estimated at 36.6 million. Nomads are viable people and a valuable national resource. On the other hand, they are the most severely disadvantaged groups in the acquisition of educational and welfare services because of their constant migration and dispersion. Nomad children are taught by their parents, older relations, and peer groups how to survive and earn a living. However, unless action is taken to arrest the cycle of educational deprivation regarding literacy and numeracy, the gap will become increasingly great in their society as the general standard of education rises in this current age of science and technology. Some countries (such as Algeria, Kenya, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Israel, Norway, Sweden, Somalia, and Australia) have taken steps to ensure the rights of the nomads to education. Recently, educational planners have begun making use of nomad culture and experience as a starting point for their education. Suggested approaches include: boarding schools, mobile school teachers, the use of radio, and correspondence schools. Adult education programs should help nomad adults acquire practical skills for dealing with their daily problems. (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321066

LITERACY LESSONS

CE055163

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

Educating nomads for self-actualization and development

by Chimah Ezeomah

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S Adlung

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UNESCO

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

WHO ARE NOMADS?

Nomadism is a world-wide phenomenon. Nomads are referred to as ethnic or socio-professional groups which travel and migrate in large or small clan groups in search of means of livelihood within a community, a nation or across international boundaries. The root Greek word 'nomos' refers to a pastoral activity carried on by a group of people over a traditional route or area for over a period of time, who share the territory occasionally with sedentary populations. This suggests an occasional symbiotic relationship with sedentary people. Because some nomadic groups are not attached to pastoralism, a contemporary definition of the word 'nomadism' refers to any type of existence characterized by the absence of a fixed domicile. In this context, nomadic groups found in different parts of the world fall into three categories – the hunter/food-gatherers, itinerant workers and the pastoralists. One of the hunting and food-gathering groups is the Hadzabe in the United Republic of Tanzania. Some of the itinerant workers are the gypsies and tinkers in Europe, Asia and North America. Pastoralists include the Fulbe, the Shuwa Arabs in Nigeria, the Masai, the Turkana and the Rendelle in Kenya, the Tuaregs in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Somali in Somalia, the Bedouins and the Harasiis in Saudi Arabia, the Bharawad, the Guja and the Reika in India, the Sami in Finland, Norway and Sweden, the Inuits in Canada and the Aborigines in Australia.

These nomadic groups constitute a sizeable portion of the world population. For instance, the United Nations studies of 1979 put the 1977 population of the nomadic pastoralists alone at 4.2 million in the Mediterranean basin, 17 million in Africa, 10.3 million in Asia-Pacific region and 5.1 million in North and South

America. In the twelve Member States of the European Economic Community, the population of the gypsies is about 1 million, bargees 37,406, circus 15,260 and fairground people 120,960.

Nomads are viable people and a valuable national resource. They contribute in various ways to the development of the communities and nations in which they live by providing social and economic services. For instance, most of the countries inhabited by nomadic pastoralists depend on them for the provision of meat, milk, butter, hides and skin. Socially, nomadic groups provide entertainment for non-nomads. In fact, to a varying degree, the cultures and languages of nomadic peoples have formed part of the cultures and linguistic patrimony of the communities in which they live.

The nomadic groups the world over, on the one hand have distinct cultural characteristics depicted by their varying economic pursuits, residential, social and political settings. On the other hand they are similar in that they are the most severely disadvantaged groups in the acquisition of educational and welfare facilities because of their constant migration and dispersion. In fact, the rate of illiteracy among nomads ranges from 50% among the gypsies, circus and fairground peoples in the twelve member states of the European Economic Community to 80% or even 100% in many other countries.

In considering the education of nomads for self-actualization and development, the discussion will be centred on their living conditions and the contributions they make towards their own survival and the survival of others, the attention paid by international agencies and national governments to their educational disadvantages, and the type of education they require.

THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF NOMADIC GROUPS

Hunter-gatherers

For our purpose here the Hadzabe, who live in the Rift Valley around Lake Eyasi in the northern part of the United Republic of Tanzania, are used to illustrate the living conditions of hunter-gatherer nomadic people.

The Hadzabe, who number about 3,000 people, live on about 2,000 square miles of land characterized by low rainfall, lack of good drinking water, limited arable areas and tsetse fly infestation.

In spite of the adverse ecological conditions, the Hadzabe obtain an abundant food supply through natural sources by moving from areas of decreased food supply to areas of abundance. Their main foods are fruits, berries, roots, honey and meat from wild animals and birds. They have a thorough knowledge of their environment and have developed the skills for exploiting the natural resources – hunting, gathering and the ability to select the resources at various seasons of the year.

The Hadzabe consume about 174.7 grammes of meat daily, a lot of vitamins and honey. They have never experienced famine in their history in an area where severe drought and livestock plagues have inflicted hunger on both land cultivators and pastoralists. Thus the hunter-gatherer nomadic Hadzabe enjoy traditional self-reliance and self-sufficiency in food. They have been able to sustain this type of lifestyle by educating and training their young informally concerning basic knowledge of their environment and the necessary skills for exploiting the natural resources.

For the past fifty years both colonial and national governments have attempted to 'civilize' the Hadzabe

through sedentarization and agriculture without success. Settlement facilities provided for them have included western-style iron-roofed houses, pipe water, schools, dispensaries, cleared land for cultivation, hoes and various cereal seeds, beehives, ploughs and milling machines to encourage them to abandon their nomadic hunting and gathering way of life and become agriculturalists. Despite these efforts of the Tanzanian Government, most of the Hadzabe returned to the bush. The few who remained in the settlement longer could not become self-sufficient through agriculture and depended on government food rations. By 1979, all the surviving Hadzabe had gone back to the bush.

Itinerant workers

Examples of itinerant workers are gypsies, bargees, circus and fairground groups.

Because the gypsies are the most populous of the itinerant workers, more attention is paid to their living conditions.

Gypsies are found in Europe, Asia, North America and Canada. Although perpetually situated at the bottom of the social, economic and political hierarchy in the countries in which they are found, gypsies practice occupations that benefit sedentary people such as coppersmithing, fortune-telling, hawking and tinning, wood-working, show business, basket-making, knife-sharpening and umbrella-mending.

The practice of traditional work roles notwithstanding, the gypsies have the ability to respond positively to new opportunities available within their environments. For instance, although the introduction of cars, asphalt paving, spray-painting, stainless steel, cheaper mass-produced goods and popular entertainments such as films is in direct competition with many of their traditional trades – and destroyed some of them – the gypsies converted these new technologies into new opportunities.

While it is true that their flexibility in responding to new opportunities, built into their culture, has enabled them to diversify their occupations, it is nonetheless true that these occupations fall into peripheral menial aspects of work. They have not been able to penetrate the scientific and technological spheres because of the lack of adequate education and training.

Nomadic pastoralists

Nomadic pastoralists are the most populous of the nomadic groups identified earlier. Their traditional economy is based on raising animals – camels, cattle, buffalo, reindeer, goats and sheep. For some pastoral nomads, their animals, especially the large stock such as camels and cattle, are a status symbol and a major part of their self-identity and self-respect.

In this regard, the larger animals are not reared and sold to accumulate money. Rather, milk, butter and unproductive animals are commercialized to meet pressing needs, such as taxation, food, ceremonies, medication for humans and animals, or to enjoy the comfort of material possessions such as clothes, utensils, radios and vehicles.

The pastoral nomads who raise animals in arid and semi-arid parts of the world move their herds constantly during wet and dry seasons in order to obtain fodder and water and to avoid disease-infested areas. And because the prevalence of disease and scarcity of water are considered the major hindrances to livestock production, most development programmes in animal husbandry in many countries are geared towards the provision of watering points and the eradication of such diseases as rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, anthrax, back-quarter and haemorrhagic splicaemia.

Although adequate water supply and disease control have succeeded in decreasing livestock mortality, such

interventions have had disastrous effects due to overgrazing and deterioration of the environment. This example illustrates that the living conditions of most nomads are little improved after spending huge sums of money on development projects. The failure of development projects can be partially attributed to the lack of involvement of pastoral nomads in the planning and implementation of the projects, and inadequate training and education to enable them to sustain development.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION FOR NOMADS

In every society, each new generation needs to learn at least enough to have a reasonable opportunity to survive and to help their society to improve. The informal process of education is used to transmit such knowledge, skills and attitudes considered necessary for the survival of individuals and society.

In the traditional educational processes, nomads devote time for social life within the group, gossiping and telling stories. In all these the children share. In the gypsy and Fulani societies, for instance, it is customary for older children to care for younger ones and perform adult domestic work while parents are out working or visiting. Amongst most hunting and animal herding groups – the Fulani, Tuaregs, Inuits, Hadzabe – children are taught hunting and herding skills early in life.

Thus, from a tender age children are taught by their parents, older relations and peer groups how to survive and earn a living. By the time they are in their teen years, they assume greater adult roles and leadership positions, thus becoming more resourceful and aware of their environment and of their values than sedentary children in schools. In this regard, young nomadic children have an education more relevant for the life they will live than their counterparts in the sedentary dominant groups who spend an unproductive adolescent life in schools.

In other ways, however, they are severely deprived, especially in the acquisition of reading and writing skills in an era of the increasing importance of literacy. Indeed, concerning education and other welfare provisions, they are probably the most deprived groups in the countries in which they live. Unless action is taken

to arrest the cycle of educational deprivation, the gap will become increasingly great in their society as the general standard of education rises in this age of science and technology. Therefore, as minority groups, they need special attention and carefully planned action.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES REGARDING NOMAD EDUCATION

Some countries faced with the problem of providing education for mobile people have taken steps to ensure the rights of the nomads to education.

In the African continent, the Algerian Government recognized the educational disadvantage of the nomads and enacted an ordinance in September 1967 aimed at reducing '... the regional imbalance and to encourage equality of access to schools for all children. Primary boarding schools were first implanted in the most disadvantaged regions of southern Algeria.'

The Kenyan Government in 1978 also developed a policy guideline for the establishment of Arid Zone Boading Primary Schools for the Masai, Turkana and Somalian nomads. The development of the policy was based on the fact that:

> *'... the government of Kenya is aware that nomads in the country are the most disadvantaged in the provision of education and other social amenities because of their isolation from the rest of the country. It is equally aware that the nomads are exposed to hardships and uncertainties resulting from drought and starvation and the lack of knowledge and skills to deal with environmental hazards apart from resorting to constant migratory drifts.'*
>
> Kenya. Ministry of Education. *Guidelines for the education of nomads in Kenya.* Nairobi, 1975.

In Nigeria, broad policy statements were made in 1976 and 1979 aimed at providing:

> *... opportunities for all citizens of the nation at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school systems.*
>
> Nigeria. *National policy on education.* Lagos, Federal Government Press, 1981.

In Europe, policy guidelines were developed in some countries for the education of mobile people. In the United Kingdom for instance, the 1944 Education Act stated that:

> *'If a local education authority is satisfied that by reason of any extra-ordinary circumstances a child or a young person is unable to attend a suitable school ... it shall have power to make special arrangement for him to receive such education otherwise at school.' Applying this policy statement to the gypsy situation, the Caravan Act of 1968 was enacted to provide education for them. Specifically, under the Education Act of 1980, local education authorities have a duty to make arrangements enabling parents of children in their area to express a preference as to the school they wish those children to attend. Each authority's duty extends to all children residing in its area, whether permanently or temporarily and regardless, for instance, of legal status of a camp site where a traveller child may live.*
>
> England and Wales (UK). Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. *The education of travellers' children: an HMI discussion paper.* London, Department of Education and Science, 1983.

In the Middle East, the Israeli Government recognized the severe educational disadvantage of the Negev Bedouin and pursued a policy aimed at establishing a separate education system for them in 1954. From 1976 to 1986, the number of pupils tripled to about 16,000, which represented 27% of the total Bedouin population.

The educational policies pursued in Norway and Sweden before the Second World War led to the establishment of 'nomad schools' for the Sami.

In 1975 the Somalian government felt the need to reform the school system in order for it to become both a relevant educational institution and an agent of change. The government enacted an educational policy which aimed to help students to understand their specific social and natural ecology, and to acquire a national outlook towards life in the Somali world.

In recognition of the social and economic disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people, the Australian Federal Parliament pursued an educational policy aimed to cater for those children who do not have access to suitable educational opportunities. The 1967 referendum was a stimulus to national action to combat the educational, economic and social disadvantages of the Aborigine at both national and state government levels.

The greatest impediment to the progress of the nomadic Fulani is the inability to use the pen.

Ardo Jafaru Julde, a nomad chief, Nigeria.

12

SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES CARRIED OUT FOR NOMADS

Specific educational programmes have arisen from the policies stated by various governments. The objectives pursued in the education of nomadic groups have tended to assimilate them into dominant cultures of sedentary peoples. In this regard, attempts have been made to change their traditional beliefs and ways of life.

The programmes emphasized acquisition of reading and writing skills to enable the nomadic children to enrol into regular schools. Thus there was wide-spread feeling among government planners that existing schools should be used by the nomads. The educational provisions made available for nomads were generally modelled on the pattern of regular school systems. Since the curricula and teaching methods used did not reflect the cultural background of nomadic groups, the children had difficulty transferring what was learned at school to solving their daily problems at home. Furthermore, because nomadic children could not easily adjust to school conditions, their attendance was irregular and their achievement in school subjects was below expectation. And because there was very poor feed-back of school knowledge to parents and uneducated relatives and friends, and almost no discernable impact of 'education' on the nomadic peoples' industry, nomadic parents were suspicious of the things they think are taught to their children in school. Formal education is often seen as largely irrelevant to nomadic life, its occupational areas, health problems, etc.

In recent years, however, the cultural differences between nomadic groups and sedentary people have been recognized. Educational planners and implementers are gradually making use of nomad culture and

experience as a starting point for their education, because it has also been realized that education provides them with the means to adapt to a changing environment and achieve personal and professional autonomy. It is thus a key factor in the cultural, social and economic future of nomadic and itinerant populations. Nomadic parents are becoming aware of this fact, and their desire for schooling for themselves and their children is increasing.

THE TYPE OF EDUCATION REQUIRED FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION

The human personality is constantly advancing towards the fulfilment of plans, hopes and aspirations in order to attain for itself greater autonomy and sufficiency, maintain integrity and fulfil its own destiny. **This is what self-actualization is all about.** *The nomadic peoples are not exempt from these goals. Within their societies, the nomads know what constitutes the ideal qualities of life, and these are expressed in the philosophical concepts that guide their lives and actions. Therefore, in their traditional setting, the major purpose of education is to transmit the social and cultural heritage resulting from their philosophical concepts.*

One of the problems confronting nomads is that the informal education provided for their children at home is inadequate to meet present and emerging needs, and therefore seriously handicaps the nomads. Because the development of science and technology leads to constant changes in the present world, the purpose of traditional education must be modified and expanded, not only in the statements made about education, but in the minds and hearts of nomadic peoples. Education for nomads must be designed to meet present and emerging needs, and the implementation of such education must be based on their actual situations.

14

FACTORS INVOLVED IN MODIFYING TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Certain basic issues must be considered in modifying the traditional education of hunter/food-gatherers, itinerant workers and pastoralists. The general problem common to these groups is: How can development be brought about in the social, economic and cultural life of nomadic peoples?

The suggested approaches are in consonance with the strategies provided in the Unesco Draft Medium-Term Plan (1990 – 1995) which states:
Past experience has shown that activities taking into account the economic, social and cultural situation of the 'learner', and designed to promote post-literacy and continuing education for young people and adults, are essential if campaigns to reduce illiteracy are to have a lasting effect. Action will be undertaken to help provide reading opportunities and to support the production and distribution of follow-up reading materials for the newly literate. Some materials, for example, may aim at broadening the general education of the newly literate in fields such as health, nutrition, child rearing, and practical aspects of daily life and work in agriculture and industry, and at encouraging young people to play an active part in the life of their communities.

Extract from: Unesco, General Conference, 25th session, Paris, 1989. *Draft medium-term plan (1990-1995).* Paris, Unesco, 1989, p. 19–20.

The constant migration of nomads makes it necessary to use a multi-faceted approach to provide them with education. The approaches must ensure that many nomads are reached and that continuity is maintained in their learning which will enable them to acquire literacy and numeracy. Suggested approaches may include boarding schools, mobile school teachers and the use of radio cassettes on which lessons have been recorded, or even radio broadcasts of lessons. Once the basic rudiments of reading and writing have been attained, well-organized correspondence lessons should be prepared in booklets and given to nomadic children. To make distance education meaningful and successful, it should be supported by a team of well-trained mobile teachers and supervisors whose role will be to ensure that the lessons are followed and assignments included in the lessons are done and corrected.

Nomads who have acquired reading and writing skills should be employed as teachers, teaching supervisors and assistants, and should be trained in curricula content and teaching methods. Adult education schemes should be strengthened by developing curricula that will enable adults, building on the rudimentary reading and writing skills, to acquire practical skills for dealing with their daily problems. This will lead to the achievement of other long-term educational goals. Whatever educational approach is used, the curricula must reflect the culture of the nomads.

CONCLUSION

Nomads are valuable national resources. They do not resist change, innovation and development. Rather they tend to resist measures aimed at destroying their cherished culture and resources which they have obtained through their familiarity with their environment and their knowledge in the use of available resources. Their skills, knowledge and organization, if encouraged and facilitated rather than belittled and obstructed, could benefit their communities and wider society as well as themselves.

This publication has been produced by the International Bureau of Education within the context of International Literacy Year, 1990.

The International Bureau of Education acknowledges with grateful thanks this contribution by Chimah Ezeomah to the cause of Literacy. Dr Ezeomah is an educational planner by training. For the past thirteen years he has concentrated his research and experimental efforts on how best to set up programmes of learning for nomadic families. For his outstanding contribution in this field he was honoured with the Paul G. Hoffman Award in 1982. He teaches at the University of Jos, Nigeria.

This document is available in English and French and can be freely reproduced, and translated into other languages. It would be appreciated if a copy of any publication reproducing this text in full or in part could be sent to: (1) ED/PBL, Unesco, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France; (2) IBE, P.O. Box 199, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Unesco. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Unesco Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Published in 1990 by Unesco: International Bureau of Education,
P.O. Box 199, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.